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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the followup and evaluation component of a project to establish and assess the effect of a mobile career exploration center in the rural school systems of the Des Moines Area Community College District. Methodology involved comparing the experimental group of 223 students who participated in the career exploration program with a control group of 100 students. Data collection included the use of the Ohio Vocational Inventory Survey, project staff summaries of each student's involvement in career exploration activities, and a followup survey. Factors included in the evaluation were (1) correlation of job selection or educational program selection with the assessment process, (2) job or educational program changes within six months of graduation, (3) relationship of stated vocational goals with aptitude test results, and (4) relationship of aptitude test results and areas explored for the experimental group. Findings indicated that participants tended to enter postsecondary education at a substantially higher rate than controls, the rate of entering the same area of employment or continuing education as stated occupational preference was nearly equal for the two groups and was much higher than the rate for the highest interest score outcomes, and participants had a lesser tendency to switch educational program enrollment or employment within six months of graduation. The annual report summarizing the demonstration component of the project is appended. (Author/NJ)

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FINAL PROJECT REPORT

GRANT NUMBER OEG-0-74-1739

PROJECT NUMBER V0231YZ

PROJECT TITLE: Community College and Local Rural Secondary Schools Cooperative Career Assessment and Exploration Program.

Submitted to

United States Office of Education

Washington, D.C.

by

Des Moines Area Community College
2006 Southwest Ankeny Boulevard
Ankeny, Iowa 50021

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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I. INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the follow-up and evaluation component of an eighteen month vocational education research and demonstration project entitled, "Community College and Local Rural Secondary Schools Cooperative Career Assessment and Exploration Program".

The Annual Report submitted for the period July 1, 1974 through June 30, 1975, summarized and capsualized the action (demonstration) component of the project. A copy of that report narrative is attached as Appendix A.

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this project was to establish and assess the effect of a mobile (transportable) career exploration center (MCEC) that would be periodically relocated within the rural secondary school systems in the eleven county Des Moines Area Community College District.

The college had operated a highly successful career exploration center at the central campus of the college, and subsequently recognized the need to extend that service to distant rural secondary schools in the college district through a demonstration project.

III. PROJECT EMPHASIS

Project delivery was accomplished via two major components:

A. Demonstration (action) component. This activity essentially comprised the first twelve months of the project. As was reflected in the annual report, the demonstration component was

a successful activity. Over 1000 rural secondary students were served by the Mobile Career Exploration Center.

B. Research (evaluation) component. Evaluation of the demonstration component made up the second portion of the project. The remainder of this report deals with that evaluation activity.

IV. EVALUATION DESIGN

A. Model

The evaluation model proposed for the project was intended initially to span a period of approximately five years. Thus, longitudinal data could have been collected to determine the long term effects of the career exploration program. In the absence of refunding, shorter term evaluative data were collected to correspond with the grant approval period.

The general evaluative paradigm for this project which utilized an experimental group/control group is commonly referred to as the static-group comparison design:

$$\underline{X} \; - \; - \; \frac{O_1}{O_2}$$

Where X represents exploration/assessment

O_1 represents the experimental group outcome

O_2 represents control group outcome

\- (dashes) represent time

Essentially, this research design compares a group which experienced the treatment (career exploration) with a control group which did not.

The static-group comparison has limitations, including:

1. There is no formal means of certifying that the experimental and control groups would have had equivalent outcomes even if the effects of X were discounted.
2. Selection of participants/control subjects varied from school to school.
3. Data collection efforts for both groups experienced experimental mortality (loss of subjects), thus weakening to some extent the total evaluative effort.

Never-the-less, the evaluative data collected is considered to be of value and to thus provide a contribution to the field of knowledge about career exploration efforts in secondary vocational education programs.

B. Elements evaluated

Evaluative data were collected on four stratification groups:

1. MCEC participants who entered continuing education upon high school graduation,
2. MCEC participants who entered employment upon graduation.
3. Control persons who continued education upon graduation.
4. Control persons who entered employment upon graduation.

Factors included in the evaluation were:

1. Correlation of job selection or educational program selection with the assessment process.
2. Job or educational program changes within six months of graduation.
3. Relationship of stated vocational goals with aptitude testing results.

4. Relationship of aptitude test results and areas explored for the experimental group.

C. Sample

Although over 1000 students received career exploration services during the action phase, a number of variables contributed to the reduction of the total number included in the evaluation component.

The project was intended to primarily serve high school seniors. Because of time requirements for bussing students from other rural feeder schools and the fact that many senior students would miss coursework required for graduation, tenth and eleventh grade students were frequently involved in the MCEC process. Although career exploration is perhaps as necessary, or even more valuable for these younger age groups, the short term nature of the study would not permit their inclusion in the follow-up portion of the study, and they were thus eliminated from the research segment.

Selection of subjects also varied from school to school. In some cases, voluntary participation was encouraged by school officials while in others, regular class sections utilized the MCEC as a portion of the program of instruction.

Control subjects were, however, comparable with participants by school district, and included some who desired to participate but who could not due to scheduling conflicts, while others were identified as being in the same academic classification but were not urged or required to participate.

For the total study, the participant/control subjects were assumed to be equivalent groups in all respects.

Of the 1009 students served, 223 were identified by the project staff as having met all of the requisites for inclusion in the study. A comparison/control group of 100 were identified.

D. The Career Exploration Process

The Mobile Career Exploration Center staff included a counselor-coordinator and three instructor-evaluators. Each of the instructors was responsible for one of three occupational clusters (business occupations, service occupations, and trade and industrial occupations).

Career exploration was provided through work sampling in various occupations as well as through the use of film strips, audio tapes, printed materials, guest speakers, visitors representing occupations in which students were interested, and field trips and tours of firms.

Exploration was available in thirty different occupations in the initial demonstration stages and was expanded during the course of the project year to provide exploration in a total of forty occupations. The instructors dealt with each student on a one-to-one basis during the career exploration process.

Students were assisted in locating information about an occupation, in performing "hands-on" tasks related to that occupation, and in learning about education and training available and needed to enter and function in the occupation.

The project counselor conducted individual counseling sessions with students on results of the Ohio Vocational Interest Survey (OVIS) and how to use information gained from exploration. Staff members recorded the reactions of students toward each occupation explored. This information was compiled into a master report which was made available to each high school counselor for student use in career planning.

The flow of the exploration process is depicted as follows:

Step One: Group Orientation to MCEC (two weeks prior to arrival of mobile unit)
↓
Step Two: Administration of OVIS
↓
Step Three: Career Exploration/Counseling (about 15 hours/student)
↓
Step Four: Report to High School Counselor
↓
Step Five: Student Career Planning
↓
Step Six: Graduation
↓
Step Seven: Employment/Continuing Education
↓
Step Eight: Follow-up

E. Method of Procedure

The method utilized in collecting the evaluative data traced a typical research design pattern.

OVIS score reports were returned to the project staff following scoring by a subscription service. Once that data had been utilized by staff, it was forwarded to the Des Moines Area Community College Research Office for decoding and classification. Appendix B exhibits the OVIS interest scale classifications. Appendix C illustrates a typical student score report.

Two primary items were extracted from the OVIS score reports.

1. Each student's stated occupational interest area, and
2. Each student's highest interest scale score.

Both items were re-coded on data collection forms by interest scale number.

Following the tenure of the MCEC at each site, the project staff prepared a summary of each student's involvement in exploration activities. The summary also indicated the recommendations offered to each student as to the most realistic occupational area which should be pursued either with employment, or further education followed by employment. The data elements concerning the area(s) of exploration and staff recommendations were subsequently entered on the data collection form.

Approximately five to five and a half months following high school graduation, a follow-up survey form was mailed to each participant/control subject. Three mailings were utilized with a fifteen to twenty-day spread between mailing dates. Samples of the survey instruments appear in Appendix D.

Data were extracted from the survey documents and were coded for further processing.

V. FINDINGS

Of the 1009 students served in the demonstration phase of the project, 223, or 22.1 percent met the criteria for inclusion in the research component. A comparison, control group of 100 students was identified. The mean grade point average of the experimental subjects was 2.94 on a 4.0 scale compared to a mean of 2.98 for control subjects.

Returns from the three mailings yielded a useable response rate of 92 of 223, or 41.26 percent, from the experimental group and 45 of 100, or 45 percent from the control group.

The post-graduation status of both experimental participants and controls is summarized in Table One.

TABLE 1. Post-graduation follow-up status of subjects

	Experimental		Control	
	N	%	N	%
Engaged in some form of continuing education (1)	59	64.1	23	51.1
Employed	30	32.6	22	48.9
Other	3	3.3	0	0.0
Total	92	100.0	45	100.0

(1) Respondents were requested to indicate any form of post-secondary educational enrollment, even if employed. Concurrent employment was thus assumed to be a facilitating means for supporting that educational program.

Data in Table One demonstrate a higher post-secondary educational enrollment ratio for experimental than for control subjects. No causal data for this outcome is available. Presumption may, however, be made that the exploration process provided students with an insight to the value of additional training beyond the secondary level.

Table Two presents data summarizing the relationship of highest interest inventory score and stated occupational choice.

TABLE 2. Highest interest inventory score and stated occupational preference comparison.

	Experimental		Control	
	N	%	N	%
Same high score and stated choice.	65	29.1	27	60.0
Different high score and stated choice.	158	70.9	18	40.0
Total	223	100.0	45	100.0

As may be noted from the data, a substantial difference existed between experimental and control groups on the relative frequency of same high score and stated occupational preference. No explanation for this phenomenon is available. Career exploration had not been experienced by the experimental group at the time of interest testing, so no cause/effect pattern is assumed.

Another comparison of interest was the extent to which students entered educational programs or employment as related to stated occupational preference and highest interest score category. These data are presented in Table Three.

Table 3. Comparison of student propensity to enter employment or educational programs similar to stated preferences and highest inventory score areas.

	Experimental		Control	
	N	%	N	%
Entered same area as highest interest score.				
Education	17 of 59	28.8	3 of 23	13.0
Employment	2 of 30	6.7	2 of 22	9.1
Entered same area as stated occupational preference.				
Education	29 of 59	49.2	12 of 23	52.2
Employment	4 of 30	13.3	4 of 22	18.2

Examination of the data reflects similar tendencies for both groups. That is, high proportions of students entering education enter a program of study corresponding to their highest interest scale score as well as to their stated occupational choice. It is of interest that more than twice as many students from the experimental group entered educational programs in the same field as their highest interest score compared to control group students. Approximately the same proportion in each group entered employment in areas similar to their highest interest inventory scale scores.

The effect of career exploration did not appear to make a substantial impact on the rate at which experimental students entered education or employment in areas the same as their stated preference when compared to control subjects. Both education-oriented and employment-oriented students in the experimental group followed through at a lesser rate than controls. This may indicate that career exploration had some impact in changing occupational area decisions.

A final comparison between the experimental and control groups reflects the degree to which participants and control subjects changed initial job or educational program decisions following graduation from high school. Table Four summarizes these factors.

TABLE 4. Degree to which students changed initial employment or educational program enrollment following high school graduation.

	Experimental		Control	
	N	%	N	%
Same job or educational program as initial decision at high school graduation.	64	71.1	26	63.4
Different job or educational program as initial decision at high school graduation.	26	28.9	17	36.6
	90	100.0	43	100.0

The data in Table Four appear to indicate that students who have experienced career exploration have a tendency to have made better, or more appropriate, decisions about educational or employment direction than control students in that a smaller percentage of the participants changed direction within six months following graduation.

Several additional characteristics of the experimental group which pertain to involvement in the exploration process are presented.

1. During the exploration process,
   a. 70 of the 223 experimental subjects, or 31.4 percent, explored the area of their stated occupational preference in the MCEC.
   b. 37, or 16.6 percent, explored the area of their highest interest score category.

2. As a result of exploration involvement,
   a. 66 of the 223 (29.6%) were urged by project staff to enter the area of their stated occupational preference.
   b. 37 of the 223 (16.6%) received recommendations to enter the area of their highest interest score category.
3. Upon graduation from high school,
   a. 16 of the 59 respondents (27.1%) who entered post-high school education did so in an area the same as the primary area they explored.
   b. 6 of the 30 respondents (20%) who entered employment did so in the same area as that which they explored.

As a part of the follow-up survey, participants were asked to respond to several items pertaining to the value of the Mobile Career Exploration Center experience.

1. Of the 92 respondents, 48, or 52.2 percent, said that the MCEC helped them to decide upon (select) a particular educational goal or job area upon graduation.
2. Participation in the MCEC was reported by 52 of the 92 (56.5%) to have been of value in deciding upon long range goals.

Although the percentages reported above are not much different from those which might be expected by chance, it should be recalled that all of the subjects were high school seniors and that in most cases career direction had in all probability been fairly well established prior to MCEC participation. Thus, it was not discouraging to find that only slightly over half of the participants found the MCEC beneficial in futures planning assistance.

VI. DISCUSSION

A number of indicators of Mobile Career Exploration Center effectiveness have evolved as a result of this project. Subjective judgment by project staff was a first indicator of success. The impact of the first year of operation in reaching over 1000 high school youth was notable. Reception of the project by college district school systems has resulted in a continuing committment to MCEC to the extent that 28 school districts have committed local funds to provide this needed service for the current 1975-76 school year period.

Empirical data collected as the result of the research component further support the Mobile CEC concept for delivery of these services to Iowa's rural youth.

The problem of collecting data from all of the identified sample group members was not an unusual one. Low response rates were indicative of failure to complete the survey instrument, and not of poor addresses. Of the 323 survey documents mailed, not one was returned by the Postal Service for unknown addresses or lack of forwarding address.

As with any other social science research attempt, a large number of uncontrolled variables were at work thereby clouding the actual effect of the exploration 'treatment'. There are, however, generalizations that may be made about the outcomes of participation in career exploration.

First, students actually do benefit from exploration in that they receive simulated. if not actual, experiences related to selected occupations. These experiences may serve to reinforce earlier decisions, to provide the catalyst for re-direction, or may only give participants an opportunity to try out hands-on exploration in an occupational area in which

they had little other special interest simply as a matter of enrichment. Frequently, these benefits are not measureable with short-term data collection techniques.

Secondly, participants tended to enter post-secondary education at a substantially higher rate than controls. This may, in part, be due to the exploration/assessment/counseling process which demonstrated the need for training to reach stated or desired occupational entry goals.

Another finding was that high interest inventory scores do not necessarily pinpoint the area of continuing education or employment pursued upon high school graduation. Students who entered post-secondary education and who had experienced the MCEC seemed to do so at a rate more than twice that of the control group. The rate of entering the same area of employment or continuing education as stated occupational preference was nearly equal for the two groups, and was much higher than the rate for highest interest score outcomes. It should be observed, however, that the subjects in this study were seniors and probably had fairly well defined goals and intents for post-graduation activities. This would explain in part the extent to which students did what they said they were interested in doing.

A fourth benefit of the MCEC was that participants appeared to have a lesser tendency to switch educational program enrollment or employment within six months of graduation. It would then be inferred that choices made as a result of participation in the MCEC yielded stability for decisions made.

Other benefits also may be interpreted from the data.

1. Approximately 7 of 10 explored areas outside of their stated occupational preference area.
2. Nearly 5 of 6 explored areas outside their highest interest score category.
3. About 70 percent received recommendations by project staff to consider an occupation other than their stated preference area.
4. Only 1 in 6 was recommended to follow-through on his or her highest interest score category.

VII. CONCLUSION

The value of extending career exploration and assessment opportunities to rural youth in Iowa was beneficial from a number of points of view. Of importance, however, are several key items.

1. Career exploration, to be successful, requires a competent staff team composed of instructor/evaluators, counselors, and committed local school officials.
2. Career exploration, valid as it may have been for high school seniors, probably is of greatest benefit to students entering the secondary school system where educational programming is still flexible enough to meet individual student needs. This participant adjustment has been made in this, the second year of the MCEC, and has resulted in greater acceptance by school officers.
3. Career exploration projects do not need to yield new materials, but may utilize those currently available, as was demonstrated by this project.

4. Career exploration, if not an integral portion of the school curriculum, requires significant resource allocation to make it work. Those resources include space, operating capital, staff and scheduled time.

APPENDIX A

ANNUAL REPORT
on

Grant Number OEG-0-74-1739
Project Number V0231YZ

PROJECT TITLE:

COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND LOCAL RURAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS COOPERATIVE CAREER ASSESSMENT AND EXPLORATION PROGRAM

SUBMITTED TO:

UNITED STATES OFFICE OF EDUCATION
WASHINGTON D.C.

by

DES MOINES AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
2006 South Ankeny Boulevard
Ankeny, Iowa 50021

Project Director

Dennis L. Krehbiel
Dean of Special Services

INTRODUCTION

This report covers for the first twelve (12) months, (July 1, 1974 - June 30, 1975) of the eighteen (18) months for which the project was funded. The first twelve (12) months was designed as the demonstration or action component with the last six months for follow-up and evaluation research.

The action component accomplished the predetermined goals of the project as was evidenced by numbers of students served and by the reaction of the participating students. Financial support by local schools to permit the program to continue a second year is also an indication of success and value of the program.

Current efforts involve collection of the data necessary for evaluation. This information will be included in the final report.

This report format is as follows:

Part I	Accomplishments of Objectives
Part II	Approach Used
Part III	Problems Encountered
Part IV	Budget Summary

DES MOINES AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
2006 South Ankeny Boulevard
Ankeny, Iowa 50021

ANNUAL REPORT (July 1, 1974 to June 30, 1975)

Part I: Accomplishment of Objectives

Objective	Status - Detail Information
A. Provide career exploration for student in rural school communities.	Completed. 1009 students in 19 schools located in rural communities were served during the action component of this project.
B. Each student will narrow their occupational choices to one or two.	Completed. A report on each student's occupational interest was provided to local school counselor.
C. Students will know where and how to apply for a job or training.	Completed. The occupational materials utilized as well as the instructors' knowledge, provided this data.
D. Each student will participate in hands on career exploration activities.	Completed. This was the primary activity of the project. All students were involved in as many activities as time permitted.
E. Students planning to enter post-secondary training will make institution and occupational choice.	Partially completed. Students made occupational choice, but were not encouraged to make final institutional choice. This was to eliminate a possible conflict of interest in the purpose of this project. The project was intended to provide career exploration and not as a recruiting tool for the college.

Part II: Exploration Approach Used

One of the purposes of this project was to use career exploration methods previously developed and not to create new models. The application proposal listed five previously developed career exploration projects. Three of these were actually utilized in this project. The foundation of the exploration program was made up of materials purchased from Project Discovery, Red Oak Learning Resource Center, Red Oak, Iowa. These materials were supplemented with the knowledge and techniques developed in Des Moines Area Community College's Career Exploration Center. The materials from the IOWAscript Project were used as supplemental occupational information.

The above information, materials and necessary exploration equipment was packed into a large van (bookmobile type) and transported to each rural site. The sites selected were centrally located within a county, and surrounding school districts bussed their students to the exploration program site. The greatest distance students were bussed was 25 miles.

This operational approach was necessary because the materials had to be unloaded from the van and set up in the school facilities. This required a day and one-half to accomplish. It also required one day to unload the program materials into the van when preparing to move to the next site.

The program was located at four different sites and served 19 school districts during the school year.

Part III: Problems Encountered

There were two major problems encountered with this project. First, the schools did not have adequate surplus space to accomodate the career exploration program. To properly set up the program required about 1500 square feet. Since space was nearly impossible to find in the schools, the program was located in teachers' lounges, store rooms, a stage and orchestra pit and a gym balcony at the various sites.

The second problem was the difficulty local schools had in bussing their students to the central location. Bussing was costly for them and many didn't feel they could justify this expenditure from a critical budget standpoint. The time required for bussing also created problems with student scheduling. It required them to miss more regular school hours than was desirable.

(Note: The program is continuing this year, without Federal funds, in three 12' by 60' mobile classrooms. These units are taken directly to the door of each participating school, eliminating both of the above problems.)

Part IV: Budget Summary

	Grant Approved Budget	Expenditures 7/1/74 to 6/30/75	Projected Expenditures 7/1/75 to 12/30/75
Personnel	$ 76,500.00	$ 74,251.19	$ 2,248.81
Fringe Benefits	7,650.00	7,284.62	365.38
Travel	4,303.00	2,398.18	1,904.82
Equipment	4,000.00	4,000.00	---
Supplies	6,950.00	6,604.21	345.79
Contractual	1,900.00	1,937.50	---
Other	5,950.00	3,178.92	2,771.08
Total	$107,253.00	$ 99,654.62	$ 7,635.88

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APPENDIX D

DES MOINES AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
2006 Ankeny Boulevard
Ankeny, Iowa 50021

Dear High School Graduate:

During the 1974-75 school year you participated in a career exploration program sponsored by the Des Moines Area Community College and your high school. The following survey will be used to determine what choices you have made concerning your plans for employment or further education. Please complete the survey as best you can.

Thank you.

Office of Research and Development

* *

1. Please indicate your present activities:

   ☐ a. enrolled in some form of education

   ☐ b. employed full-time (no educational enrollment)

   ☐ c. Other (Specify_____)

2. If you marked a above, go on to item 3. If you marked b, go on to item 4.

3. (For those enrolled in some form of education) What is your present "major" or area of study beyond the high school level?

   _____

4. (For those currently employed) What is your present job title?

   _____

5. Did participation in the career exploration program help you decide to select a particular educational goal or job area after high school graduation?

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

6. Did participation in the career exploration program seem to be of general value in helping you decide upon your long-range plans?

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

7. Is your present educational program or your present job the same one that you first decided upon after high school graduation?

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

8. What was your final high school grade average? _____
   (Use a scale where A=4.00 and D=1.00)

Thank you for participating. Please insert the survey in the enclosed envelope and mail.

DES MOINES AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
2006 Ankeny Boulevard
Ankeny, Iowa 50021

Dear High School Graduate:

During the 1974-75 school year you and other classmates completed the Ohio Vocational Interest Survey (OVIS). Some of those completing the OVIS went on to participate in a career exploration program sponsored by the Des Moines Area Community College and your high school, while others of you did not. This survey is intended to help determine whether participation in exploration played any part in helping persons decide upon future plans. Although the results of the survey may not be of benefit to you directly, they may help others in the future.

Would you please spend a couple of minutes completing this survey and then return it in the enclosed envelope?

Thank you.

Office of Research & Development

* *

1. Please indicate your present activity:

   ☐ a. Enrolled in some form of education

   ☐ b. Employed, no educational enrollment

   ☐ c. Other (Specify_____)

2. If you marked a above go to item 3; if you marked b go to item 4.

3. (For those enrolled in some form of education) What is your present "major" or area of study?

   _____

   Continue with item 5.

4. (For those who are employed) What is your present job title?

   _____

5. Is your present educational program or your present job the same one that you first decided upon after high school graduation?

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

6. What was your final high school grade average? _____
   (Use a scale where A=4.00 and D=1.00)

Thank you for your help.

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